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ABSTRACT

The present structure of the multi-disciplinary team in crisis centers for adolescents lacks training for youth workers in the decision-making process. This report discusses the development of a youth worker position on a multi-disciplinary team in a short-term residential crisis center for adolescents. Three youth workers, for a period of 3.5 weeks, participated in a multi-disciplinary team whose objectives were to improve the youth workers' decision-making abilities, to change the role of the discipline within the agency, and to evaluate the training. The report is divided into five chapters: (1) introduction; (2) a study of the problem; (3) goals and objectives; (4) solution strategies; and (5) results, conclusions, and recommendations. Survey results indicated a very positive response from participating youth workers and a sense that the objectives had been reached. The report concludes with plans to legitimize the system in the future. A one-page bibliography is included, and pre- and post-implementation questionnaires are appended. (TE)

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Development of a Youth Worker Position On the Multi-Disciplinary Team In a Short Term Residential, Crisis Centre For Adolescents.

by

Elizabeth Doll

Cohort XXX11

A Practicum Report Presented to the National Master's Program for Child Care Administrators in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Science

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1990

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Dec 14/90
Date

Elizabeth Doell
Signature of Student

Abstract

Development of Youth Worker Position of the Multi-Disciplinary Team. Doll, Elizabeth L., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, Master's Program for Child Care Administrators. Descriptors: Child Care / Group Decision Making / Teamwork / Job Satisfaction / Employee Attitudes / Multidisciplinary Team Approach

The present structure of the multi-disciplinary team lacks inclusion of the youth worker discipline on a consistent and legitimized basis. Youth workers are lacking training with regard to the decision-making process and as a result feel disempowered and dissatisfied with the system.

Three youth workers, for a period of three and a half weeks each, participated in the multi-disciplinary team. Training, supervision and support were provided. The objectives were to improve the youth workers decision-making abilities,to begin to change the role of the discipline within the agency and to evaluate the training that was provided.

Surveys indicated a very positive response from the youth workers who participated; in all cases they felt the objectives had been reached. Plans to legitimize the system in the future are being considered. Appendices include pre and post implementation questionnaires.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The practicum setting in which the problem occurs is a short term, residential, crisis centre, servicing adolescents between the ages of 16-21 years of age. The Residence is a 30 bed facility, servicing both genders.

The corner stone of the programme is the conviction to provide a sanctuary from the streets. This means they may find shelter with the agency seven days a week, 24 hours a day. If the youth has been in the programme before, shelter may be denied, but only if there is an alternative referral available. This philosophical premise, that no youth is to sleep in the streets, means that the number of youth being case managed by the agency may fluctuate drastically. The number of clients may rise as high as fifty but never goes lower than thirty.

There are two buildings where the youth are sheltered; the Intake Centre and the Residence. Eight years ago, when the agency first became operational, designers of the programme allotted 30 beds for the youth; 15 for females and 15 for males. Within four days of opening, the beds were filled, and the overflow of males and females needed to be sheltered. The Intake Centre from that day forward, has slept the excess of males and the Residence has slept the excess of females on the floor.

Each youth is orientated by a youth worker on arrival and paired with a Primary Worker who may or may not be a different

youth worker. The expectation is that the Primary Worker will complete an assessment within 72 hours of the youth's intake. During the 72 hours before the assessment, youth workers are expected to engage the youth and to present them with alternatives to street life, the various programmes available, and to build relationships. Until the assessment is completed, the only discipline the youth has indepth contact with, is the youth worker discipline.

After the assessment is completed, it is presented to the multi-disciplinary team. Case-management meetings occur once a day, five days a week between 10a.m. and 12p.m. Each member of the team, except the youth worker discipline, is expected to attend daily, give feedback on cases being discussed and to process issues at a team level.

Each resident's case is discussed once a week for the duration of their stay. After each case-management meeting, recommendations or directions for the youths' plans are taken back to the floor by the Shift Supervisor. The youth workers then contact the youth with the information. All recommendations or decisions may or may not be made without the input or feedback from the youth workers.

This writer is the Programme Manager for the Residence. This writer oversees the day-to-day operation of the Residence. This includes directly supervising five Shift Supervisors and one Team Leader, and indirectly supervising two Social Workers, 18 full-time Youth Workers and 20 casual youth workers. This writer is also responsible for all scheduling, hiring and firing of staff. There

is also the responsibility for preparing and implementing the yearly service plan and budget which is approximately 1,000,000 dollars.

This writer is also responsible for providing clinically sound intervention to the client population, through the vehicles of training, and effective implementation of the multi-disciplinary team model. This would include each discipline working together as an integral part of the multi-disciplinary team to provide effective service delivery and to develop a professional identity.

The Programme Manager is a member of the Programme Managers Team which is comprised of four other Programme Managers in the agency. This team is supervised by the Director of Programme Services, who is a member of Senior Management. The Programme Manager's Team is responsible for evaluating programmes, changing or making policies and procedures and for the on-going development of programmes. Any changes that occur on the multi-disciplinary team would be at the discretion of the Programme Manager's Group.

Chapter 2

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Definition

Effective functioning of an ideal multi- disciplinary team depends on many variables. Each participant must feel membership, a sense of professional identity and mutual credibility. Members have the responsibility to enhance and work towards optimum team process and service delivery.

During the past year, two departments in this writer's agency were decentralized; they were Health Care Services and Social Work. Once this process was completed, the multi-disciplinary team became the vehicle to case manage the youth who were living at the Residence.

Each discipline, on the team, is represented because of their specific expertise and assessment abilities. They are as follows:

1. Team Leader. This person is overall case manager and every member of the team is responsible to this position for case management. The Team Leader chairs the daily meeting.
2. Social Worker. This discipline is responsible for clinical assessments, on-going counselling of youth and referrals to other agencies.
3. Pastoral Minister. This person is responsible for assessments and feedback at the spiritual level.
4. Shift Supervisor. There are three people who rotate in this position. They are the supervisors of the youth workers but do not work frontline. They are the liaison between the case

management team and the Youth Workers.

5. Nurse. The nurse is responsible for health care assessments and counselling around health care issues.

6. Youth Workers. This is the only discipline that is not a regular member of the team. They may attend the meeting if other tasks do not take priority. Although the Primary Workers are encouraged to give feedback, it is in written form.

During each case management meeting youth worker assessments are presented to the Team by the Shift Supervisor. A discussion then occurs as to whether the plan the youth has requested is viable. Recommendations from the youth worker, who completed the assessment, may be documented either in the file or on the assessment.

Apart from the initial assessment, the youth are discussed once a week for approximately 10 minutes. During these discussions the Team Leader is updated as to the progress of the youth's plan. If a Social Worker has done a clinical assessment, the team would discuss this, with the Social Worker present. If the youth had health care issues, the nurse would discuss these. Any youth worker issues would be brought up through the Shift Supervisor using the youth's file. If more information is needed to make a decision, and a youth worker is not present, the Team Leader uses valuable time, outside the meeting, gleaning the information from the youth worker. Over the past two months there have been 15 meetings that youth workers have been unable to attend.

Frequently, because decisions need to be made immediately, the team would proceed without their feedback.

Youth workers are responsible for documentation in the youths' files; these are referred to as "client notes." These make up a running log that detail the youths' progress at the Residence. It is this file that is used to update and give feedback to the case management team. Without the "client notes", that are written by the youth workers, case planning for the youth could not occur.

A multi-disciplinary team functions effectively if each team member feels part of the team. The team should strive for a feeling of mutual trust and credibility. This occurs with working together on an ongoing basis, processing issues, attending meetings and respecting each others point of view.

The discrepancy between the system that exists and the ideal,is that the youth worker discipline is not a consistent or integral part of the team. The expectation is that the meeting and therefore their input, is not important for effective service delivery. The system has always compensated for the fact that youth workers may not always be able to attend and therefore decisions about the youth have been made without them.

The result of this problem is that youth workers lack a sense of professional identity. They feel less important than the other disciplines, disempowered and not part of the team. They communicate to one another that there is the "Team" that makes all the decisions and they are apart from the decision-making process. This feeling is not one of pure speculation but one

clearly set up by the system. Members of the multi-disciplinary team feel that the youth worker profession is not acknowledged nor respected if, first,there is a multi-disciplinary team and they are not a legitimized member, and second, decisions are made without their input.

Analysis of Causes

According to the youth workers, when they do attend the meetings, there is a sense of involvement and importance. There is also a sense of being a visitor to the team. Having attended many meetings, this writer's observation is that youth workers only give opinions when asked and do not join into discussions as do the legitimized members.

Many youth workers feel that simply writing the information and recommendations in files does not truly represent there opinion since they feel their writing skills are less refined than their ability to articulate. They present that fair and reasonable decisions cannot be made about cases without their input; they do not feel this can be done through "client notes".

Evidence

Results from a Pre-test Questionnaire (Appendix A) completed with youth workers, indicate that youth workers are clearly dissatisfied with the system as it presently exists.

Youth workers within this writer's system want to be recognized. This means that they need acknowledgement beyond the fact that they wake the youth up and put them to bed. Real

acknowledgement for them is attending meetings,since it is their belief that important people attend meetings and make decisions; it is generally people with power that make decisions. They are not part of a decision-making forum and therefore feel disempowered.

Relationship to the Literature

The literature that was reviewed substantiated what is presently the situation at this writer's agency; the lack of decision making involvement of the youth worker discipline. Several articles were concerned about the lack of acknowledgement of the professional status of Youth Care; some authors were more positive than others.

Thomas E. Linton(1988) describes child and youth care workers as follows:

> Child and youth care workers receive virtually no social recognition or professional status for the difficult, exhausting and important work they have chosen. Unlike the fields of psychiatry, psychology, social work and special education, the field of child care can boast of only a handful of university-base programs for the education and training of its members. Child and youth care workers sit, uncontested, at the bottom level of the American mental health hierarchy.(p.5)

Karen VanderVen (1979) is more optimistic in describing the advancements of professionalising the discipline. She acknowledges that there have been efforts to upgrade the profession and these efforts have resulted in "group care practitioners expecting equal participation with other professionals like psychologists, social workers, educationalists
or doctors in decision-making processes as they affect programme functioning and a child's well being"(p.101). This supports the

present concern in this agency with regard to youth workers wanting to attend meetings to give input, but not being given the opportunity.

VanderVen (1979) has documented in another article that "child care workers who participate in a team may still be considered 'non-professional' simply because of their discipline and therefore are not received into the team " (p.290). This would make them feel inadequate in participating on the team. Therefore, it is simply not enough to have them sit on a team, support is necessary. VanderVen also states:

> Before an interdisciplinary team can truly work together, its individual members must have an articulated sense of their own professional identity. A sense of individual professional identity also provides a basic sense of self-esteem, that allows a team member to be open to hearing and accepting the ideas of others. Individual professional role identity should be recognized and understood by other team members as well. In this way, the various team members will not only be able to articulate what special contributions they can make to the team effort, but also have others know what these are so that they can appropriately be called upon.(p.292)

In the same article, VanderVen has documented that necessary skills to participate on an interdisciplinary team can be taught. These include "problem solving, system concepts and group process"(p.292). She also promotes "participative decision making"(p.294) which is especially applicable to child care workers. Feedback and participation in meetings should be especially elicited from child care workers. This will not only aid the child care workers to participate on the team but will also empower them with the youth, since they will have been part of the decision-making process(p.294).

Kruegar (1983), accurately states both the problems plaguing child care workers and some solutions to the problems:

> So even though many programs claim to overcome the handicaps inherent in their organizational structures, in reality caregivers are no more involved in decision-making than they were in the past. These programs have opened the organizational avenues on paper, but without adequate training, a schedule which makes it possible for caregivers to attend team meetings and equal professional status for all team meetings, it is hard for caregivers to really get involved in decision-making.(p.46)

Kruegar emphasized that the team model can work if "staff members(i.e. psychiatrists, social workers, teachers, specialists, caregivers and administrators) contribute to a shared decision making process"(p.57). If this occurs, the assumption is that because child care workers are involved with decision making, then job satisfaction will increase. There is also the belief that treatment effectiveness will be increased because the people making the decisions are the disciplines that work most closely with the youth(p.57). Kruegar also suggests that in order for the team to be effective there must be professionalism for all, decentralization, training, and attendance(p.69).

Chapter 3

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

The goal of this writer's practicum was to provide the opportunity for youth workers to feel more empowered and to be part of the decision-making process.

Objectives

In consultation with the Shift Supervisors, who supervise the youth workers, it was felt that if only one youth worker was involved for the ten week implementation period, other youth workers would feel more alienatated from both the multi-disciplinary team as well as a part of the decision-making process than already exists. Therefore three different youth workers did participate. The objectives were as follows:

1. Over a period of 10 weeks, three of the 13 youth workers increased their decision making ability, as measured by a pre and a post implementation questionnaire assisted and supervised by training sessions provided by this writer.
2. Over a period of ten weeks, three of the 13 youth workers actively participated in changing the role of the discipline within this writer's agency as measured by a pre and post implementation questionnaire.

3. Over a period of ten weeks three of the 13 child care workers were provided with training by this writer.

Evaluation Methods

Evaluation methods consisted of a comparison of results between the Pre and the Post-Test Questionnaire. These results support objective one and two.

The third objective was accomplished by an evaluation of the training provided by this writer. This was measured by this writer attending case-management meetings and observing the youth workers week by week. This writer's observations and training sessions were documented weekly.

Chapter 4

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Information Collection

The review of the literature and feedback from other sources, has indicated that the problems concerning youth care are universal but that certain strategies can be mobilized to aid in solving the issues.

The literature clearly indicated that if youth workers could be more involved with the decision-making process then job satisfaction would increase, youth workers would feel more empowered, and a level of professional identity would be developed. Youth workers, from other agencies, felt that they were regarded as equals to social workers; no decisions were made around their primary caseload without gleaning their feedback. They also had a heightened awareness as to how a team functions; they felt this was due to supervision and training.

The literature also emphasized the need for systems to be sensitive to the schedules, attitudes and training in regard to youth workers. It simply is not enough to cater to a nine to five schedule and expect that youth workers will feel integrated into the system.

Solution Strategy

The strategy to support solving the practicum problem was to place the youth workers on the multi-disciplinary team on a rotating basis.

The literature emphasizes the need for agencies to reach out to the plight of youth workers and to acknowledge youth workers as equals to other professions. It was made clear that this would be a long and arduous process, and that there are many parts to the whole, but attending meetings and being part of the decision-making process was recognized as being very important. The decision to opt for more effective case management and therefore better service delivery, over organizational structure emphasized the need for this discipline in the decision-making process.

Implementation Plan

Each youth worker, who participated in the implementation period, had their schedules changed to accommodate the meetings. Their usual schedules are on a seven day rotational basis. During their involvement with the practicum implementation period their schedules were changed to Monday to Friday 8a.m. to 4p.m. This affected the overall schedule, resulting in casual workers having to fill in where the participating youth worker had been pulled from their original schedule.

During the three and one half weeks the Youth Worker was expected to attend a daily meeting from 10a.m. to 12p.m., work closely with the Team Leader, report to the youth workers the

decisions and discussions that occurred at the meeting, and to fulfill their youth worker responsibilities. Each youth worker was supervised and trained, by this writer, to participate on the case management team.

Each youth worker, who participated on the case management team for three and a half weeks, was required to give this writer feedback as to their experiences on the team. The goal of the weekly meetings was not only to support, train and supervise the youth workers but to discuss their recommendations,and the strengths and weaknesses of the system. This information is critical because if this system should come to permanent fruition, they will have had direct involvement in planning, and therefore more of an investment to support the system.

This writer worked closely with the Team Leader since this person attended the team meetings daily. This writer attended the meetings weekly and on two occasions chaired the meetings since the Team leader was absent. This writer felt the team would find it intrusive if attendance occurred more than once a week. The goal was to observe the players within the group as well as the progress of the Youth Worker.

Follow-on

The practicum provided the necessary documentation to support the need for the Youth Worker discipline becoming a legitimized position on the multi-disciplinary team. This will be documented in the 1990-1991 service plan; a cost analysis was completed.

Chapter 5

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The results from the ten week implementation period were evaluated using a comparison between a pre (Appendix A:23) and post (Appendix B:25) implementation questionnaire as well as observations from both weekly training sessions and the multi-disciplinary team.

Each youth worker met with the Programme Manager on a weekly basis. The Programme Manager spoke with the Team Leader for feedback as well as attending the case management meetings on a weekly basis to observe the change in skill level of the youth workers.

In post implementation questionnaire, question 2 required feedback concerning the weekly meetings and the training provided by the Programme Manager. The youth workers responded that they found the supervision process very supportive and in fact crucial to being able to perform at a professional and credible standard acceptable to the team. They also stated that the meetings focussed on the expectations of the youth workers and provided clarity to the role. The weekly meetings provided an opportunity to discuss policies as well as communication difficulties, problem solving and the development of the position on the team.

The Programme Manager was able to evaluate how effective these supervisions were by observing the participant at the meetings. Each participant became more articulate around issues,

involvement in discussions increased, knowledge of policies and procedures increased and their leadership abilities with other youth workers also increased. For two of the three participants, the Team Leader was requested to support their involvement by directly asking their opinions and where possible support their ideas. The youth workers felt that this supported them in feeling appropriately articulate in the meetings that took place later on.

Evaluation methods for Objective One are the results from the pre and post implementation questionnaire. The pre-implementation questionnaire had indicated that for some the issue was not about speaking out, it was about not knowing the right questions or understanding what information was needed to make a decision.

The post implementation questionnaire clearly shows that being a consistent worker on the team provided them with the opportunity to learn the skill of decision making for case management decisions. The feedback indicates that the process was developmental. The first week was spent observing. Towards the end of the second week the youth workers were asking questions in order to make a decision; this was the direct result of having increased knowledge about how decisions were made on the team. They experienced a more sophisticated decision making process. As indicated in the pre implementation questionnaire most youth workers believed they were not involved in the decision making process. The post implementation questionnaire indicated that even if their feedback had been asked for, without the consistency of involvement and the knowledge of systems and process, their

feedback and involvement was ineffective. In summary, until the youth worker was educated as to how the system operated they were not cognizant of their lack of knowledge; this also applies to this writer.

The second objective refers to changing the role of the discipline within this writer's agency. The Youth Workers who participated in the implementation felt that because they were present on the Team on an on-going basis they were much more cognizant of how the cases were developing and how the system operated. This in turn influenced how they functioned as a part of the team; they knew the jargon and were therefore more able to articulate, and participate. The youth workers also stated that on occasions they struggled with living up to the team standards of professionalism due to their lack of training but that having the support of the Programme Manager as well as being supervised by this person heightened their confidence level.

Conclusions

The results indicate that the objectives were achieved; youth workers decision making ability improved, youth workers actively participated in changing the role of the discipline and the training provided by the Programme Manager was effective.

The conclusions support the literature that was previously reviewed. Kruegar (1983) stated that schedules, the involvement in the decision-making process and training are major issues for legitimizing the profession. The results support that changing

youth worker's schedule helps to legitimize the importance of their role on the team, supporting their participation with training and support legitimizes the profession and lastly that empowering them to be part of the decision making process ultimately leads to professional effectiveness within the system. The fact that the youth workers were able to have one month of day shifts with weekends off made the role seem even more attractive. They had, for that one month, a schedule comparable to other disciplines. There was a period of readjustment going back to their original schedules, but this was shortlived and had no negative impact on morale, according to their feedback.

This writer also concludes from the results that the process of legitimate participation on a multi-disciplinary team is a developmental process. Youth workers go through stages that will eventually lead to being a functional member of the team.

Evidence supported the fact that the system needs to accept, and support the concept. This would include the acknowledgement that intense training and supervision are necessary for youth workers who have historically not been part of the team, to be accepted. As stated previously by Vanderven(1979) youth workers may still be considered 'non-professional' simply because of their discipline. Extra training and support may be necessary as well as a process to raise the consciousness level of other team members.

The last point to be made is that unless youth workers participate on the multi-disciplinary team for a period of time, they will be discriminately lacking knowledge of systems, process,

and how decisions are made. This also raises the question about the overnight youth workers and the need for them to also have a comprehensive understanding of how the system operates.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will be made to the Programme Managers Team:

1. That youth workers participate on the multi-disciplinary team for a constant period of time so that their understanding and involvement in the decision-making process is enhanced; this included the overnight youth workers.
2. That youth workers participate on the multi-disciplinary team for a period of four weeks.
3. That youth workers are provided with training and supervision specific to the skills needed to participate on the multi-disciplinary team.

The future goal of this writer is to circulate the information amongst colleagues so that the results of the Practicum are known and that the two multi-disciplinary teams that are presently in place will adopt the philosophies and the recommendations stated above.

The indepth examination by this writer of one of the gravest problems facing residential youth workers today, has alerted many people to the plight of this discipline; peers, youth workers and other disciplines involved in the work place. The goal and responsibility to raise the awareness and support the evidence so

clearly indicated in this practicum rests with those who believe that changes need to be made.

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APPENDIX A

PRE-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-Test Questionnaire

Pre-Test for Youth Workers

1) Do you feel Youth Workers have representation on the Case Management Team (C.M.T.)?

2) Do you feel your decisions about the youth are made without Youth Worker feedback?

3) When you do go to C.M.T., do you feel confident to speak out and give your opinions?

4) Would you like to attend more regularly?

5) In your opinion, if there is shortage of staff available in order for a crisis to be averted, is having a Youth Worker attending the meeting a priority?

6) What do you identify as being important for a Youth Worker in a system - to enhance the professional identity of the discipline?

March 13, 1990

APPENDIX B

POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

Post-test for Youth Workers

1. How has the experience of participating on the Case-Management Team for three and a half weeks, heightened your awareness and knowledge of the role of the Youth Worker?

2. Did the weekly meetings with the Programme Manager aid in supporting and identifying training issues? Did the meetings help to put your development on the Case-Management Team into context?

2. Compare the first day of your assignment versus the last day. Were there differences in how you felt?

3. Your involvement on the Case-Management Team had been sporatic in the past. Do you feel that this system gives you a comprehensive understanding of how decisions are made?

4. In your opinion would this system help to support, empower and educate the Youth Workers. If so, how?